

Director's Remarks, June 2010

Performance

Circulation in May 2010 (66,891) almost matched performance in May 2009 (67,127). As a result, we still show an overall gain of 34,440 against last year. However, the relatively good performance this month comes entirely from downloaded books and Northgate Branch, and June 2009 was a huge success with over 90,000 circulations. It will be very tough to match.

Our Children's and Young Adult Coordinator Lee Hope has managed impressive gains in Summer Reading Program sign-ups during the first few weeks and Della Phipps in our Reference Department is managing both a teen and adult summer reading program. We also have a pending marketing grant request with the Community Foundation and will be rolling out new signage soon.

Closing Sundays as of July 1 (Board approval requested)

Sunday service has not paid off in terms of attendance or downtown circulation and costs more each week than the evening hours that were dropped. We had combined two shorter evening shifts into one long afternoon shift that requires more staff on hand and employees to cover breaks. In addition, with the closure of the Fine Arts and Business departments, employees in Local History and Children's are isolated and we need to have two people in both departments in order to insure safety. In that we will have to make up any excess we spend during the first quarter of the year when the County budget is finally set, the Library recommends ending Sunday service until that time.

Staff In-service Day, Friday, August 6 (Board approval requested)

The Library requests approval for our annual in-service day for training and planning. As before, the Library will close at noon and all staff will meet for the afternoon at our Eastgate branch. These sessions have proven to be very helpful in the past and are especially important to us as we explain system-wide changes resulting from the downtown reorganization.

Facilities Master Plan & New Strategic Plan (Board approval requested)

Bob McNulty from the Partners for Livable Communities spent about 5 hours on Wednesday, May 5 touring Brainerd and our downtown building with a City/Library Task Force/River City delegation. Their primary focus was on visioning statements for the Brainerd development (David Barlew/Artech) and the downtown library (Professor Joshua Emig from Auburn). It is not in the best interest of the Library to be passive recipients as opposed to active participants in a plan for any future system.

Can we now join forces with the Regional Planning Agency and local governments to build a master plan for development? The City and County will spend the next fiscal year deciding our fate (renegotiating the sales tax agreement expiring in May 2011) based on where they think we ought to be headed. It seems in our best interest to work with them on a sustainable future, one based on available sources for funding. Without such a plan, we risk alienating communities like Soddy-Daisy that need a branch library, but also isolation from politically popular but poorly planned alternatives (e.g. Signal Mountain &

East Ridge). The Brainerd community is building momentum for a new branch, but has a very nebulous sense of optimal placement and size. Several representing Soddy-Daisy have expressed frustration with our failure to offer a concrete plan for their area. Recent designs for a new downtown library by a group of Auburn graduate students raise questions about what we are doing to fix our problems downtown.

The Library Taskforce established a two-year strategic plan that will expire at the end of June 2011. We will need to begin planning the budget for the following year (FY2012) in about eight months. We have new data from national and local surveys of library patrons. Can we begin setting up a strategic planning effort with Karen McMahon and the Library Taskforce or on our own?

Reorganization Downtown

The Library staff has now shifted all the government documents up to the third floor and closed off the majority of the second floor. The Children's and Local History departments normally scheduled one person to work each night. Since they had another staffed department nearby, security wasn't an issue, but both the Business and Fine Arts departments are now closed. Our intent is to establish a volunteer-run check-in desk at the entrance to Local History and to schedule Pages (book-shelvers) in both Children's and Local History during the evening hours as well as expand our security camera system network. We will be opening up the bathrooms on the first floor to patrons while the second floor is closed. We are on schedule to complete the RFID labeling of downtown books, the carpeting of the second floor, and the final move of first floor collections to the second floor prior to our annual fundraiser on October 16.